

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 14529

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,CH, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIETS VIEWS ON POST-MAO CHINA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. A LEADING SOVIET SINOLOGIST SAYS THAT HE EXPECTS NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN CHINA--EITHER IN DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN POLICY--FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR AND PROBABLY LONGER. (ANOTHER SOVIET GAVE A THREE-MONTH TO FIVE-YEAR TIME FRAME FOR ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES). THE MAO-STALIN PARALLEL WAS INVOKED TO SHOW THAT THE TRANSITION TO A NEW LEADER WOULD TAKE SOME TIME, AND THAT ONE COULD NOT EASILY PREDICT WHO WOULD EMERGE. THE SINOLOGIST DID NOT RULE OUT SOME EVENTUAL IMPROVEMENT IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS, BUT INDICATED THAT HE SAW THIS IN THE DIM FUTURE AND NOT AN EARLY PROSPECT AFTER MAO'S DEATH. HE SAW THE CHINESE MILITARY AS THE KEY ELEMENT IN THE

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SUCCESSION COALITION: HE DOUBTED THAT CHIANG CH'ING

OR WANG HUNG-WEN WOULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT FUTURE LEADERSHIP ROLES; AND HE WAS MODERATELY POSITIVE ABOUT HUA KUO-FENG. HE SAID THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR TOL'STIKOV WAS SCHEDULED TO RETURN TO PEKING ON SEPTEMBER 20. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF CALLED SEPTEMBER 14 ON LEV DELYUSIN, CHIEF OF THE CHINA SECTION OF THE ORIENTAL STUDIES INSTITUTE, TO DISCUSS POST-MAO CHINA. (SOVIET MFA OFFICIALS REMAIN UNAVAILABLE). DELYUSIN, WHOSE EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN CHINESE AFFAIRS DATES BACK TO THE 40S, SAID THAT HE EXPECTED NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN PEKING'S POLICIES, INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL, FOR AT LEAST A YEAR AND PROBABLY LONGER. THE SUCCESSOR LEADERS WILL TRY TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO MAO'S POLICIES, HE SAID, AND IN ANY CASE NO ONE LEADER WILL BE STRONG ENOUGH TO CHANGE MUCH FOR QUITE A WHILE. THEY WILL HAVE TO CONCENTRATE ON DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, HE SAID, AND THEY HAVE ALREADY SAID THAT THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TENG HSIAO-PING WILL CONTINUE.

3. DELYUSIN SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE SOVIET DECISION TO SEND A PARTY-LEVEL MESSAGE TO THE CHINESE HAD BEEN A MISTAKE. HE SAID THAT THE CHINESE HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE SOVIET MESSAGE AND THOSE FROM SEVERAL OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. THIS WAS THE FIRST SUCH PARTY MESSAGE SINCE EARLY 1965, SAID DELYUSIN, AND THE CHINESE REJECTION INDICATED THAT THEY CONSIDERED PARTY RELATIONS TO HAVE BEEN BROKEN SINCE THAT TIME. DELYUSIN SAID THAT THE SOVIETS SHOULD HAVE SENT THEIR MESSAGE IN THE NAME OF THE SUPREME SOVIET AND SIMPLY TO HAVE EXPRESSED "CONDOLENCE" ON THE DEATH OF CHAIRMAN MAO (NET "DEEP CONDOLENCES" AND "SYMPATHY").

4. ASKED WHAT CHANGES WERE LIKELY IN CHINA, IN VIEW OF THE LONG PERIOD OF EXPECTATION BEFORE MAO'S FINAL DEMISE, DELYUSIN SAID THAT MAO'S DEATH, WHILE IT WAS EXPECTED, WAS STILL BOUND TO BE A SHOCK TO THE CHINESE. HE SAID THAT STALIN'S DEATH HAD ALSO BEEN EXPECTED BY THE SOVIET LEADERS AT THE TIME, AND THAT ALTHOUGH THEY CONCEALED THE EXTENT OF STALIN'S ILLNESS
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FROM THE PUBLIC, THOSE WHO READ THE SIGNALS OF STALIN'S NON-APPEARANCES COULD TELL THAT THE END WAS NEAR. EVEN SO, HE SAID, THE TRANSITION WAS NOT SMOOTH AND ONE COULD NOT HAVE PREDICTED WHO WOULD EMERGE FROM THE GROUP AROUND STALIN --SOME SAID MALENKOV, SOME SAID KHRUSHCHEV, SOME SAID OTHERS. IT TOOK SOME TIME AND CONSIDERABLE MANEUVERING BEFORE KHRUSHCHEV EMERGED AS THE PRIMARY LEADER. IN CHINA ONE COULD GUESS WHO THE

PRINCIPAL ACTORS WOULD BE IN THE SUCCESSION DRAMA, BUT ONE COULD NOT ESTIMATE WHICH ONE AMONG THEM WOULD EMERGE AS THE PRIMARY LEADER. IN THE MEANTIME, THE COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP WILL BE CONSTRAINED FROM MAKING ANY SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURES FROM MAO'S POLICIES. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN FOREIGN POLICY WHERE ANY MAJOR DEPARTURE, SUCH AS BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, WAS CERTAIN TO BE CRITICIZED. (COMMENT: DELYUSIN STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT HE EXPECTED SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS TO BE NO WORSE BECAUSE OF MAO'S PASSING, BUT HE WAS RELUCTANT TO SAY THAT THEY WOULD GET BETTER VERY QUICKLY. END COMMENT.)

5. A FURTHER POINT WEIGHING AGAINST ANY EARLY CHANGE, DELYUSIN SAID, WAS THAT THE CHINESE HAD SHARPLY CRITICIZED KHRUSHCHEV FOR HIS DE-STALINIZATION EFFORTS. TENG HSIAO-PING HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY CRITICAL, SAID DELYUSIN, CLAIMING THAT IT HAD BEEN A SERIOUS MISTAKE TO DENOUNCE STALIN AND TO REVERSE HIS LINE. SUCH A MOVE RAISED QUESTIONS OF CONFIDENCE AND REFLECTED ON THE OTHER LEADERS OF THE TIME, TENG HAD ARGUED. MAO ALSO DISAGREED WITH KHRUSHCHEV'S DECISION, SAID DELYUSIN, EVEN THOUGH MAO HAD NO LOVE FOR STALIN; IN FACT, HE COULDN'T STAND HIM. WHEN EMBOFF REACTED WITH SURPRISE, POINTING OUT THAT THE CHINESE HAVE MADE A POINT OF KEEPING STALIN IN THEIR GROUP OF PARTY SAINTS, DELYUSIN SMILED AND SAID THAT THIS WAS SYMBOLIC IN PART OF THE BAD PARTY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO, AND IT WAS INTENDED TO RECOGNIZE STALIN'S ROLE AS AN HISTORIC LEADER OF THE SOVIET PARTY AND OF THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AT THAT TIME. DELYUSIN SAID THAT MAO HAD WRITTEN A BOOK DOCUMENTING STALIN'S ABUSES OF THE CHINESE PARTY, BUT THEN SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT ALLOW THE BOOK TO BE PUBLISHED UNTIL LONG AFTER HIS OWN DEATH. MAO
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THOUGHT THAT STALIN WAS CRUDE, UNCULTURED, TYRANNICAL AND IRRESPONSIBLE. THEIR PUBLIC CORDIALITY WAS BORN SOLELY OF NECESSITY, DELYUSIN ASSERTED, ASKING RHETORICALLY, "AFTER ALL, WHERE COULD THE CHINESE TURN?" THEY HAD JUST HAD A WAR AGAINST THE JAPANESE, AND INDIRECTLY THE GERMANS, BOTH OF WHICH WERE IN RUINS. THE U.S. FOR ITS OWN REASONS WOULD NOT HELP MAO. SO, THE CHINESE DID WHAT THEY HAD TO. BUT THERE SHOULD BE NO ILLUSION THAT THIS ALLIANCE WAS BORN OF ANY CORDIALITY BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS.

6. RETURNING TO THE POST-MAO PERIOD, DELYUSIN SAID THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT DURING THE SUCCESSION WILL PROBABLY BE THE CHINESE MILITARY. HE THEN DISGRESSED INTO PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF DEFENSE MINISTER YEH CHIEN-YING AND MENTIONED MEETING HIM SEVERAL TIMES IN CANTON IN THE

EARLY 50S (WHEN DELYUSIN WAS A PRAVDA CORRESPONDENT IN CHINA). HE DESCRIBED YEH AS A MAN OF CULTURE WHO HAD RECEIVED A CLASSICAL CHINESE EDUCATION AND WROTE POETRY HIMSELF ("AND BETTER THAN MAO'S POETRY", DELYUSIN ADDED).

IN ADDITION, YEH HAD BROAD VISION AND A COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO ISSUES. YEH HAD VISITED THE SOVIET UNION SEVERAL TIMES BUT, DELYUSIN ADDED, IT WOULD NOT BE CORRECT TO DESCRIBE HIM AS "PRO-SOVIET". YEH HAD ALSO HAD EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE DEALING WITH THE AMERICANS (THE MARSHALL MISSION) AND WAS MORE EXPERIENCED IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS THAN MOST OTHER CHINESE LEADERS. UNFORTUNATELY, SAID DELYUSIN, YEH IS AN OLD MAN AND IS APPARENTLY ILL. HE HAS NOT BEEN VERY ACTIVE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND HIS SPECIFIC INFLUENCE IN THE LEADERSHIP IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE. AMONG OTHER MILITARY FIGURES (CHEN HSI-LIEN AND HSU SHIH-YU WERE MENTIONED), DELYUSIN SAID THAT THEY LIKE MOST OTHER CHINESE LEADERS AT THE TIME MAY HAVE VISITED THE SOVIET UNION AT SOME POINT IN THE 50S BUT THAT HE PERSONALLY WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THEM AND DID NOT KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL OPINIONS.

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7. TURNING TO OTHER FACTORS, DELYUSIN SAID THAT THE PARTY WOULD ALSO BE IMPORTANT, BUT SOME OF ITS LEADING MEMBERS WOULD NOT BE. FOR EXAMPLE, CHIANG CH'ING WOULD PROBABLY NOT REMAIN A SIGNIFICANT FIGURE. SHE HAD BEEN CALLED A "SHAIGHAI WHORE" IN A RECENT WALL POSTER AND WAS NOT RESPECTED BY THE CHINESE PEOPLE, DELYUSIN ASSERTED. WANG HUNG-WEN WAS ALSO PROBABLY ON FAIRLY SHAKY GROUND, SINCE ACCORDING TO A TAIWAN REPORT HE HAD BEEN OPENLY OPPOSED BY THE MILITARY. A KEY FIGURE TO WATCH IN THE PARTY STRUCTURE WAS CHANG CHUN-CHIAO (WHO WAS A YOUNG MEMBER OF A CHINESE JOURNALISTS DELEGATION WHICH DELYUSIN HAD ACCOMPANIED ON A 50A DAY TRIP THROUGH THE SOVIET UNION IN THE MIDDLE 50S). DELYUSIN DID NOT ELABORATE ON CHANG.

8. ON HUA KUO-FENG, DELYUSIN SAID THAT THE SOVIETS,
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LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, KNEW VERY LITTLE ABOUT HIM. HE HAD NOT BEEN ACTIVE IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS DURING THE 50S AND HAD ONLY EMERGED AS A CENTRAL LEADER VERY RECENTLY. BUT HUA WAS NOT A "MAOIST", SAID DELYUSIN EMPHATICALLY, ADDING THAT HE HAD RECENTLY RE-READ HUA'S SPEECH AT TA-CHAI LAST FALL AND HAD NOTED THAT HUA HAD NOT INVOKED THE TYPICAL MAOIST SLOGANS IN THE USUAL WAY. THE "LEARN FROM TA-CHAI" SLOGAN WAS THE SUBJECT OF RENEWED ATTENTION TWICE A YEAR AT LEAST, DELYUSIN JOKED, ADDING THAT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN LEARNING FROM TA-CHAI FOR SO MANY YEARS NOW THAT SOME MAY WONDER WHAT MORE THERE IS TO LEARN* THE POINT IS NOT THE SLOGAN, HE SAID, BUT THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS USED. THE SAME IS TRUE OF THE USE OF MAO'S TEACHINGS, WHICH WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE INVOKED TO SUPPORT WHATEVER LINE OF POLICY THE SUCCESSOR LEADERS CHOOSE TO FOLLOW.

9. COMMENTING ON SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN THE FUNERAL CEREMONIES, DELYUSIN SAID THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR WAS STILL ON LEAVE IN MOSCOW, AND PLANNED TO RETURN TO CHINA ON SEPTEMBER 20. HE WAS NOT AWARE THAT TOL'STIKOV'S PLANS HAD CHANGED BECAUSE OF MAO'S DEATH.

10. IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION ON SEPTEMBER 10, USA INSTITUTE DEPUTY DIRECTOR ZHURKIN TOLD EMBOFF THAT MOSCOW EXPECTED THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP TO REMAIN STABLE

FOR A PERIOD RANGING FROM A MINIMUM OF THREE MONTHS TO
A MAXIMUM OF FIVE YEARS. WHEN EMBOFF ASKED WHETHER
THE SOVIETS REALLY EXPECTED NO CHANGES AT ALL FOR UP TO
FIVE YEARS, ZHURKIN SAID THAT OF COURSE THERE MAY BE
CHANGES WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP GROUP BUT THAT THE MAIN
LINES OF POLICY--PARTICULARLY POLICY TOWARD THE MAIN
OUTSIDE POWERS--WOULD PROBABLY REMAIN LARGELY UNCHANGED
AND THAT NO ONE WOULD HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO
UNDERTAKE MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR QUITE A WHILE. HE SAID
FIVE YEARS WAS AN OUTSIDE ESTIMATE AND THE SOVIETS HOPED
THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR SOME IMPROVEMENT
IN RELATIONS BEFORE THAT TIME. BUT HE SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY
WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN. THE CHINESE
LEADERS WOULD BE EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS ABOUT ANY IMPROVEMENT
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IN RELATIONS WITH THE USSR SINCE NO ONE WOULD WANT TO
SUBJECT HIMSELF TO CRITICISM FROM ALL HIS COLLEAGUES BY
SUPPORTING A CONCILIATORY LINE.
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